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frontiers

Issue 6 September 1987

Work starts on new road

A Cadastral survey party has just completed the centerline survey for a new road through the Nome Creek valley in the White Mountains National Recreation Area.

Dubbed the "gateway" to the recreation area, the road will start at mile 57 on the Steese Highway at Nome Creek and branch both upstream and downstream to major recreation destinations (see map next page). The east end of the road goes into the mountains in the alpine and subalpine areas and ends at timberline. Mount Prindle is visible from that point. The west end of the road is at the confluence of Nome and Ophir Creeks.

The proposed gravel road will permit access by two wheel-drive and large recreation vehicles. Along the road there will be numerous parking turnouts for fishing, day hikes and goldpanning. One short hike will be a one-mile trail to the top of Table Mountain, which offers a panoramic view of the White Mountains. Visitors will 'be able to pick blueberries, cloudberries, highbush cranberries — and an array of mushrooms.

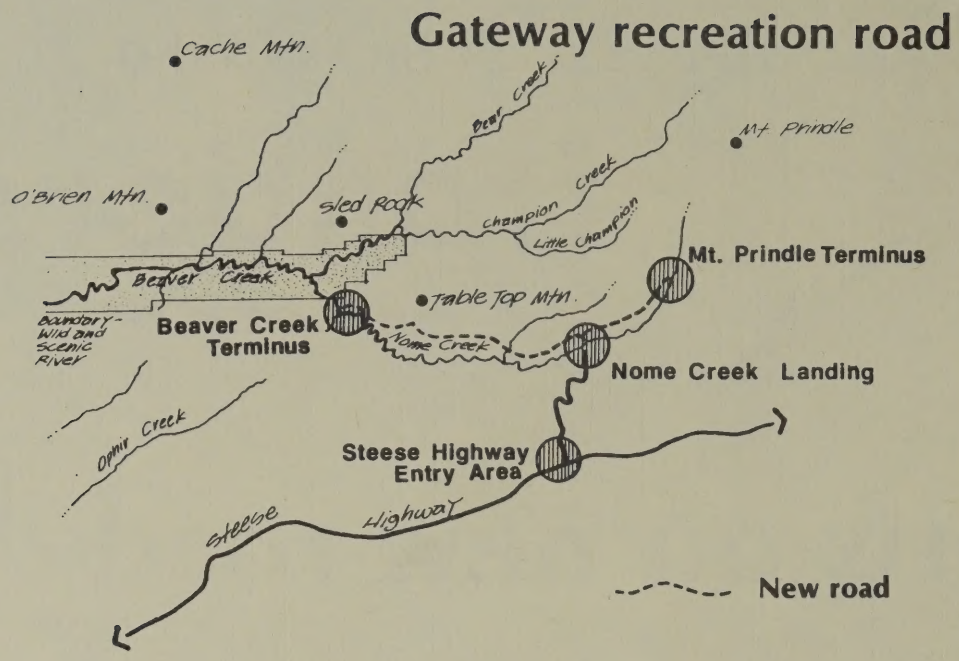
Another attraction of this area is its plentiful wildlife. Karl Woods, one of the surveyors, reported, "While we were working out there I saw a golden eagle, short-eared owls, boreal owls, bear, moose, caribou, ptarmigan and beaver."

BLM plans to build a 30-unit campground at the west end of the road. This will be a staging area for float trips down Beaver Creek (just one mile downstream) and for day hikes, such as the five-mile hike to the massive and curious Sled Rock, or for extended hikes along the river or alpine ridges. At the east end of the road there will be a six-unit campground, a viewing platform and a trailhead for hikes to Mt. Prindle and into the Pinnell Mountain area.

Nome Creek valley is about 20 miles long and five miles wide and runs along the southern

Continued next page

The road will let large recreation vehicles visit the national recreation area. Mount Prindle, near the east end of the new road, can be seen beyond transit man Karl Woods as he records data.



Work starts *continued from page 1*

border of the White Mountains National Recreation Area. There is a history of gold production on this creek, with a dredge working much of the valley bottom as recently as the early 1960s. Mining continues today in certain sections, but most of the valley is open to recreational goldpanners. Good access will allow visitors to pan from gravel on both the sides of the valley — gravel that was missed by the dredge in earlier years.

In the winter the road will improve access for snowmachines and dog sleds. Most winter visitors travel to the BLM public recreation cabins located throughout the area.

The resource management plan for the White Mountains area directed the planning team to do a feasibility study of the alternate road routes into the White Mountains. This study was completed the summer of 1986 and the team recommended the present route.

At the beginning of the planning process, the planning team established criteria to assure that the developments within the valley would be well-designed, that destinations would be worth the drive, and that well-designed facilities would be built in inconspicuous sites.

One goal for the Nome Creek Road project is to reflect the national significance of the area by developing suitable facilities.

—SDW

Slide shows highlight BLM programs

This summer the BLM State Office in Anchorage is presenting a series of lunch time programs on activities on the public lands. These feature slide or video shows with talks by scientists or program managers. The programs are held 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. in the Executive Dining Room of the Anchorage Federal Building, 701 C Street. The public is invited and for details call Wayne Boden, 271-5477.

Coming:

August 11 - Jules Tileston: the Trans-Alaska Gasline project

August 18 - Jim Halloran: Natural re-vegetation on placer tailings in the Circle Mining District.

Military land plan begins

The Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Army are beginning to develop resource management plans for the 248,000-acre Yukon Maneuver Area of Ft. Wainwright near Fairbanks and for 623,600 acres of Ft. Greely near Delta Junction. These lands are used by the Army for maneuvers, training, and equipment development and testing.

When Congress renewed the temporary withdrawal last year, it directed the BLM to investigate and recommend other ways these lands can serve the public interest during the 15-year withdrawal period. BLM, in cooperation with the Army, will write a Resource Management Plan (RMP) for each withdrawal area to identify potential uses compatible with the land's military mission.

Congress specifically suggested BLM consider options for the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat, control of predatory and other animals, development of recreational opportunities, fire suppression, and opening of lands to mineral entry.

"We are asking the public to identify issues," said planning team leader Jim Ducker. Issues already identified by the planning team are related to wildlife and wildlife habitat, economic development, recreation, access and military use. News releases, a brochure and a series of "open house" meetings are all part of the BLM's public involvement effort.

"The plans cannot be used to decide that the withdrawals will not be used for military training. Congress has already said that military training is the primary purpose of these areas," said Ducker.

The plans must be completed by November 1989. Team members include representatives from the BLM Alaska State Office, the Steese-White Mountains District Office and the Army.

—EB

Judge okays mining to Nov. 15

In the Sierra Club's suit against BLM, the U.S. District Court has agreed to postpone until November 15 the date when injunctions will halt mining operations on BLM-managed land on Birch Creek, Beaver Creek, the Fortymile River and certain areas of the Minto Flats.

But the court refused the Alaska Miners Association's request that the date be extended beyond that.

U.S. District Judge James von der Heydt also modified the injunctions to clarify BLM's enforcement responsibilities, stating that "BLM remains obligated to order the closure of any mine found, at any time while the injunctions are in force, to be operating without an approved Plan of Operations where such a Plan is required by the regulations."

The Interior Department's Deputy Regional Solicitor Dennis Hopewell says, "I read this as giving BLM the full flexibility of its normal non-compliance regulation, 43 CFR Section 3809.3.2."

Hopewell also said the court declined to be any more specific about what it intended an "adequate" environmental review to be, and expressly retained jurisdiction to resolve uncertainties regarding the adequacy of BLM's environmental reviews.

In May Judge von der Heydt had ruled that mining operations must stop by October 1, 1987, until BLM completes the required environmental and subsistence reviews covering the cumulative impacts of mining operations on Birch Creek, the Fortymile River, Beaver Creek and several rivers draining into the Minto Flats area northwest of Fairbanks.

As of July 21, the Department of Justice has 60 days in which to decide whether it will appeal the May decision.

Meanwhile, the BLM is going ahead as fast as possible on the EIS. Team Leader Dick Dworsky says, "We're now finishing a draft of the plan of study. We expect to get out a Notice of Intent in the next couple of weeks. The team members are nearly all on board." In addition, some sources outside the agency are being sought for research work. "We're entering into agreements with the state to collect water quality and habitat data on the drainages, and we're getting some consultant contracts," Dworsky says.

Technical coordinator for the project will be Page Spencer. Members of the resource team are geologist Tom Mowatt, mining engineer Bill Hauser, economist Keith Bennett, landscape architect Don Hinrichsen, mining adjudicator K.J. Ferencak, and typist Debbie Llacuna.

Review and assistance will be provided by a number of other specialists and staff people.

—JM

Editor's Note

In the last issue of Frontiers it was stated that a decision not to appeal the court order had been made. This was incorrect. A decision on an appeal has not been made. Frontiers regrets the error.

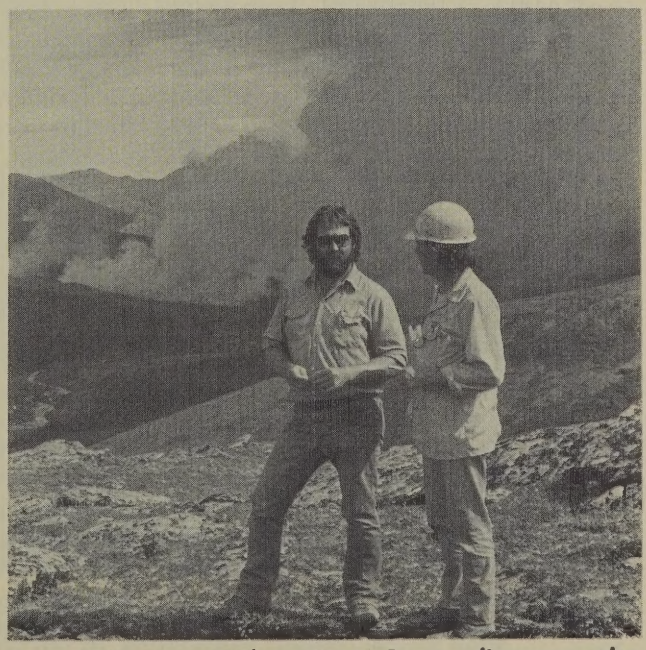
Prescribed fire ignited in White Mountains for wildlife habitat

The BLM conducted a controlled burn June 25 in Interior Alaska, about 60 miles north of Fairbanks in the White Mountains National Recreation area. Out of 10,000 acres proposed, about 6,000 burned. BLM Alaska Fire Service personnel had no trouble confining the fire to its designated area, which was surrounded by natural rock barriers on three sides.

The fire was an attempt to create a mosaic of habitat types by breaking up continuous stands of black spruce. Alaska Department of Fish and Game and BLM biologists hope the fire will not only increase willow, birch and other moose browse, but also provide better habitat for many other species.

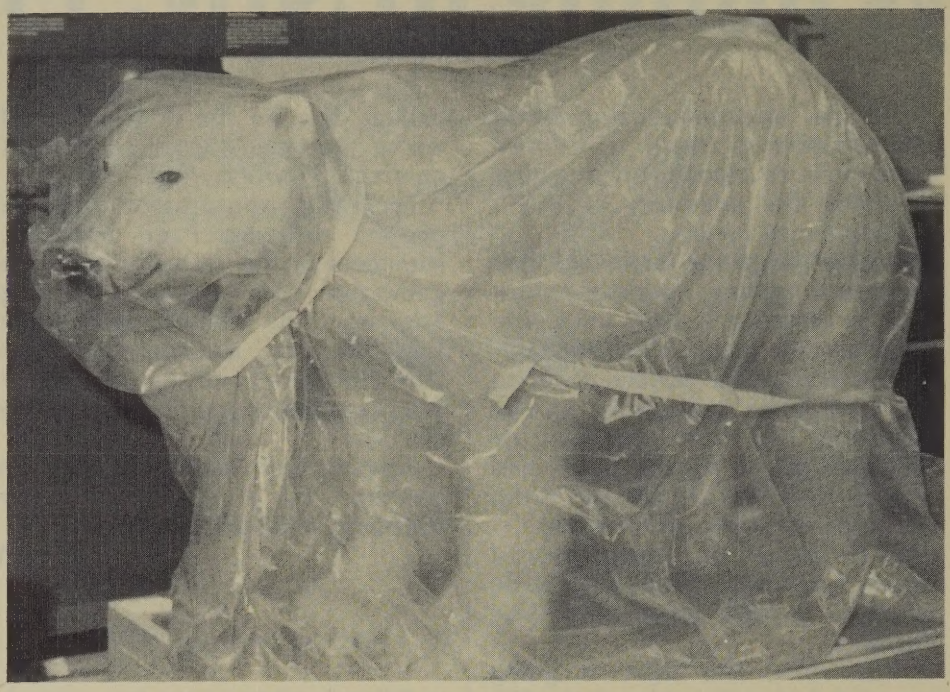
This prescribed burn was proposed in the White Mountains Resource Management Plan/EIS, published in 1984. A site-specific environmental analysis and burn plan were completed on June 10.

—SS

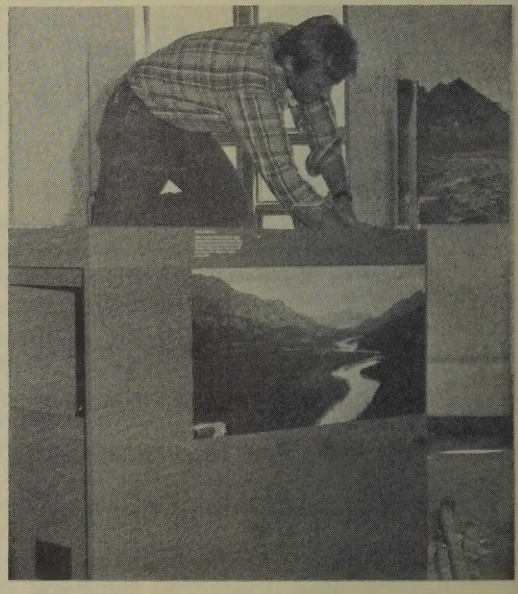


Fire behavior analyst Don Barry discusses the progress of the fire with biologist Bruce Durtsche from a vantage point in the White Mountains.

Wraps
public lan



Mounted polar bear about to emerge fr exhibits in the renovated Old Federal Buil The new center tempts visitors to explore t public lands.



Photos, murals, artifacts and short video features of Alaska.

Want to know a great place to do some day dreaming on a rainy summer afternoon? Or where to go to plan next year's vacation? This month's great place is just the spot - the new Alaska Public Lands Information Center in Anchorage.

Located in the historic Old Federal Building at Fourth Avenue and F Street, the Anchorage center is one of four established by Congress under the Alaska National Interest Conservation Lands Act. It is jointly sponsored by eight federal and state agencies including the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, the U. S. Geological Survey, the Alaska Division of Tourism, Alaska Department of Natural Resources and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Designed by the National Park Service's Harper's Ferry interpretive staff, the center offers photographs, artifacts, models and short video programs that show visitors the natural and cultural wonders of the state. Historic photographs can be viewed through old-fashioned stereoscopes.

Visitors planning trips can use video terminals to call up information about more than 200 specific sites on the public lands throughout the state. There is information on hiking opportunities, fishing spots, historic sites or tourist services.

In addition there is a "fishing hotline" display that is to be updated daily during the summer fishing season.

Movies and special slide programs will be shown in the small auditorium.

A large touchable relief map of Alaska, plus dozens of animal mounts and a special exhibit on how to dress for travel in Alaska both winter and summer are also among the center's attractions.

To offer information to people touring Alaska's largest city, the Anchorage Municipal Parks and Recreation Department and the Convention and Visitors Bureau helped in the preparation of an exhibit on recreation in and around Anchorage.

Doug Cuillard of the National Park Service is the manager of the center, which is scheduled to open in August.

He says that in addition to the exhibits there is a bookstore operated by the Alaska Natural History Association.

The center is to be formally dedicated on September 8 at 5 p.m.

-JS

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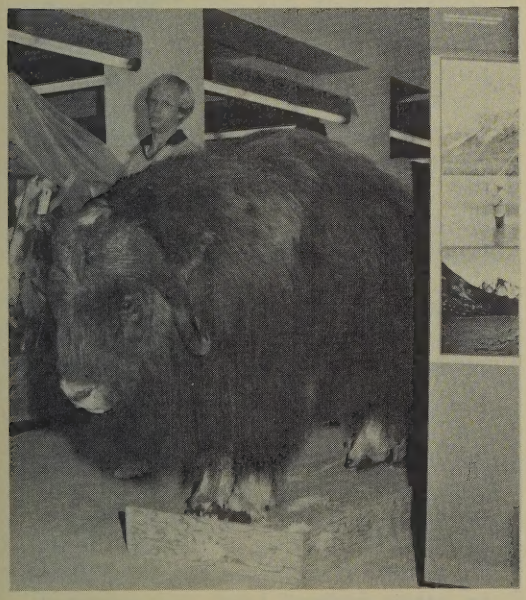
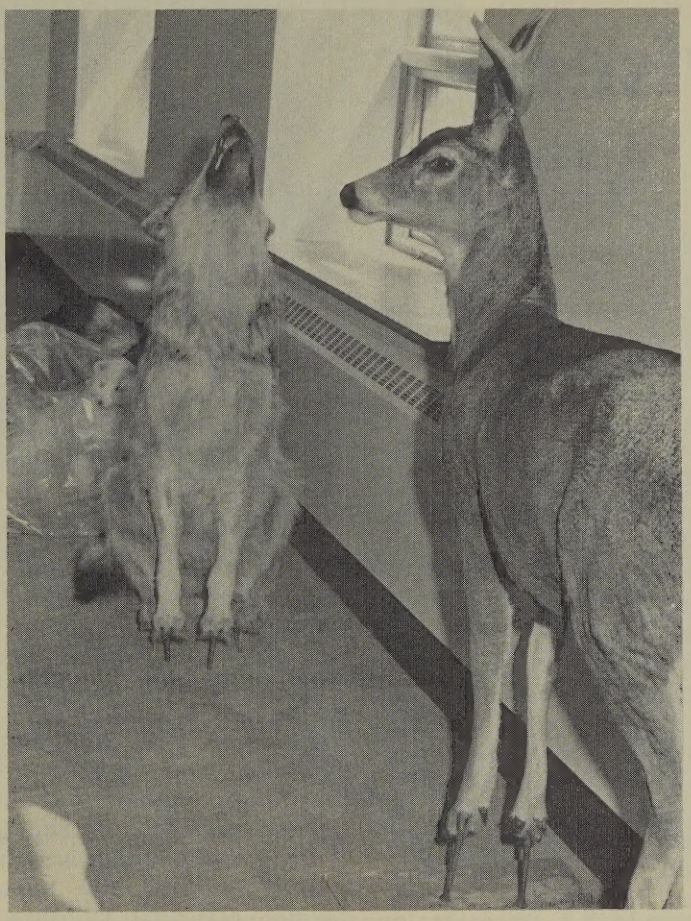
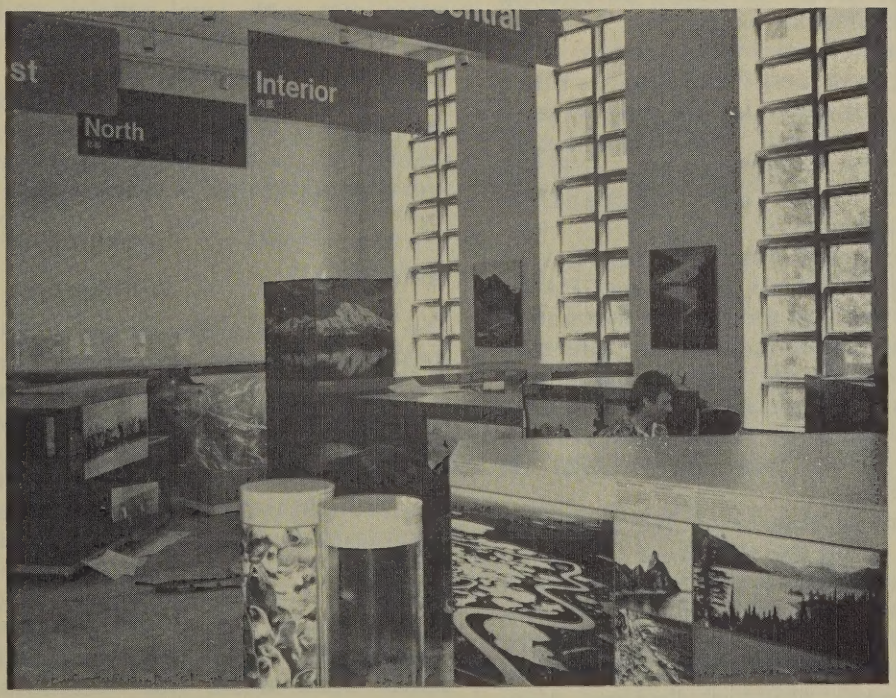
ds center

his plastic cocoon (left) will be one of the on 4th Avenue, Anchorage, shown above. ghts, sounds and natural wonders of Alaska's



grams highlight the cultural and natural





Above, deer and wolf mounts await installation. Below, space in the public lands center is divided by geographic regions of the state.

National advisers see Alaska

Should the Bureau of Land Management grant a permit for construction of a natural gas pipeline across Alaska? How should the utility corridor be managed? What priority should be placed on conveying lands to the state?

These and other issues were to be considered by the National Public Lands Advisory Council, a 21-member group of citizens from 11 western states, including Alaska. But apart from the two Alaska representatives, only one or two council members had ever visited the state.

Feeling at a disadvantage, the council lobbied BLM Director Robert Burford to schedule a meeting in Alaska. Wells O'Brien, council chairman, said,"Our purpose was to acquire a feel for the state and to observe the management situations about which we would be offering our opinions."

Council members began their education June 15 in Fairbanks with a tour of the BLM facility and a series of briefings about BLM programs such as fire suppression, surface protection and recreation management.

From Fairbanks the council flew to Prospect Camp along the Dalton Highway and then drove the road as far as Galbraith Lake. Enroute they learned of the many management questions posed in the Utility Corridor Resource Management Plan and viewed the Trans-Alaska oil pipeline.

Among the 18 council members who made the tour were O'Brien, a Nevada attorney; Robert Adams and Robert Flournoy, California; Calvin Black and James Bowns, Utah; Donald Butler and Cecil Miller, Arizona; Howard Eppers, New Mexico; Gerald Creasey, Oregon; David Delcour and Raymond Friedlob, Colorado; Paula Easley and Alan Epps, Alaska; Lawrence Kelley, Texas; Eddie Moore, Wyoming; David Schaenen, Montana; Bill Swan, Idaho;and Robert Wright, Nevada. Governor Garrey Carruthers of New Mexico and William Golding, Washington, joined the council for its formal meeting in Anchorage.

Council members take a close-up look at Trans-Alaska Pipeline at milepost zero at Prudhoe Bay.

Progressing northward, the council visited Prudhoe Bay, Kaktovik, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Kotzebue and Nome. At Nome, they again met with local officials and toured a reindeer herding operation and two mining operations.

On June 19 the council convened their formal session in Anchorage, where they heard public testimony and drafted a series of resolutions.

—JS

Corrections

The article in July's edition,"EPA Report May Mean New Woes For Oil," drew criticism from the Alaska Center for the Environment. Not only did the Center take issue with the tone and substance of the article but they brought to our attention that the hazardous waste disposal site closest to Alaska is Arlington, Oregon, not Arlington, Virginia, and that drilling muds under proposed state regulations would be regulated under **solid** waste not hazardous waste regulations.

Although it is not the policy of *Frontiers* to run letters to the editor, we welcome your comments, kudos and criticisms.

Group starts numbering easements

Easements may seem like a technicality to some people, but they give specific legal rights both to the traveling public and to the private land owner. Without designated easements it would not be legal to cross lands owned by a private individual or corporation. An easement guarantees that the public will be able to get to the public lands.

"There are literally thousands of easements which have been reserved under Section 17(b) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) to provide the public with access across private lands to public lands and waters," said Ken Hext, easement management coordinator for the BLM. He has been working with an interagency task force to develop an easement management plan that includes inventorying, numbering and installing signs on the easements.

As a first step to the management of easements, the BLM has launched a statewide inventory. The task requires a review of interim conveyance documents which transfer lands from the BLM to other owners to find the description of each reserved easement. Details such as the beginning and ending points and length of each easement are recorded on a form to be entered into the computer. The process also identifies trails which need to be completed by acquiring access across other private lands such as Native allotments or patented mining claims.

Inventories in the Glennallen and Anchorage Districts are complete, and one for the Kobuk District is in progress. A part of the inventory involves identifying which easements have been transferred from the BLM to other federal land management agencies. For example an easement which leads to a wildlife refuge will be managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In addition to the inventory work, a new system of numbering easements will be field-tested in BLM's Glennallen District this year, according to Hext. This system will enable BLM to generate maps that show the location of easements on the ground.

"In order to manage those easements and be able to tell the public where they are located, the interagency task force identified the need for a statewide system," said Hext. A subcommittee of the task force looked at several methods for numbering the ANCSA easements. The one they chose is patterened on a system other agencies use throughout the country. Easements are numbered according to their general location in the state. Although the task force is dealing primarily with ANCSA easements, they will be numbering all transportation routes within the state. For example major highways and waterways are numbered as reference points for the ANCSA easements.

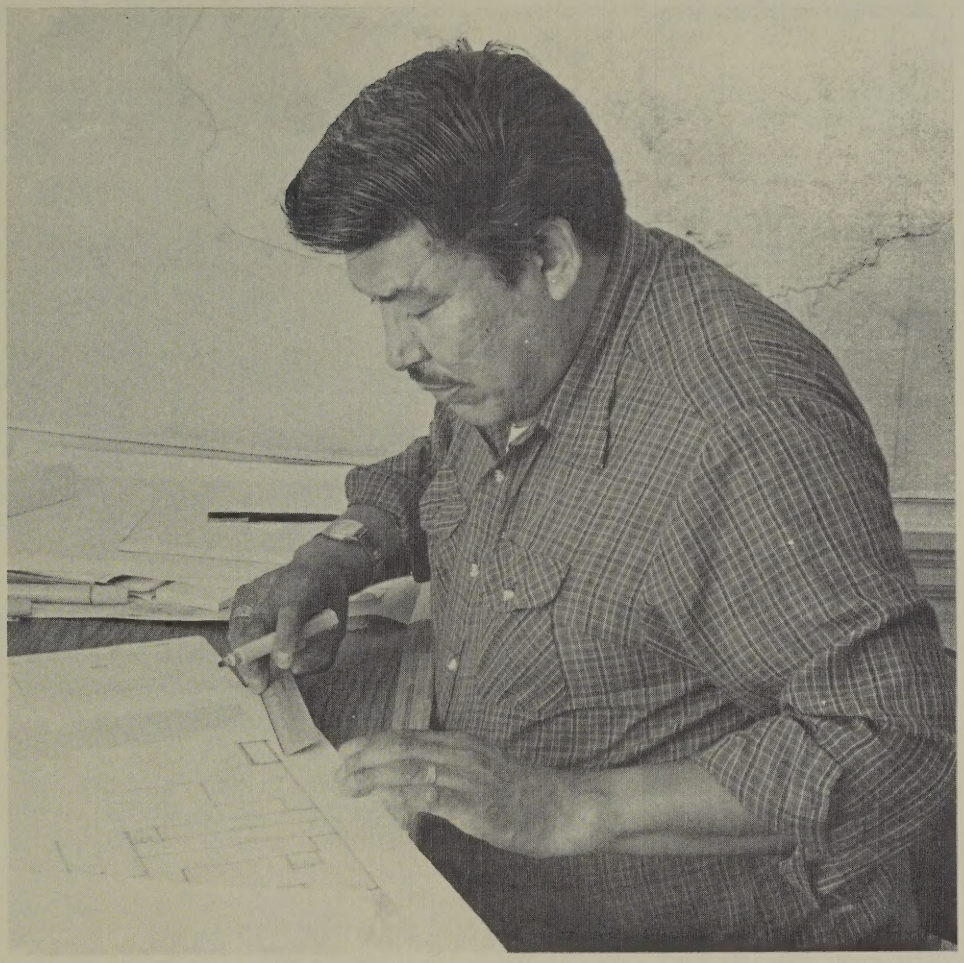
Sam Grimes, Forest Service transportation planner who serves on the numbering subcommittee, led a workshop in July to acquaint BLM personnel with the proposed system. Data processing specialists also attended to discuss how the system can be entered into the BLM's main computer.

Grimes said any of the federal or state agencies managing an easement will be able to use the easement number, but no other agency may assign or change a number. That is BLM's function.

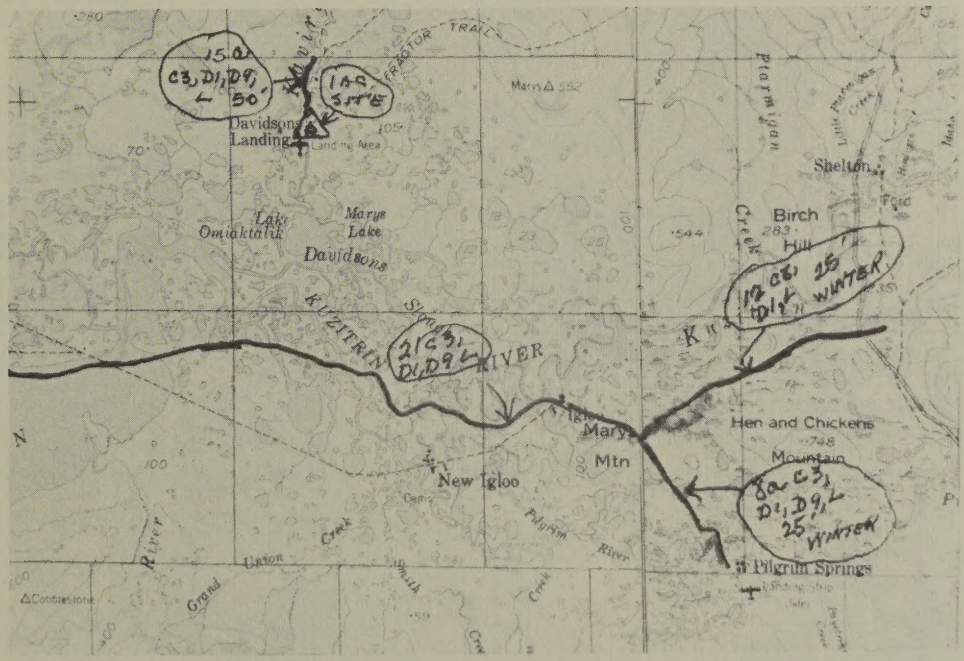
BLM's Glennallen District, a compact unit which was one of the first districts to complete an inventory of easements within its boundaries, was chosen to test the system. Eventually all five districts will phase in the system.

In addition to the numbering system, the Task Force is addressing the preparation of signs and maps for the easements. A brochure explaining the types of easements and their use will also be published.

—JS,SS



For the statewide inventory of existing easements, a BLM employee of the Kobuk district locates the easements on a map. Below, each easement is marked and numbered on a map like this. Two districts have completed these inventories.



frontier flashes

Congratulations! **Alaskans for Litter Prevention and Recycling** has been chosen a Take Pride in America national winner. Representatives of ALPAR received the award from Vice President Bush at a ceremony in Washington. They also were invited to be congratulated by President Reagan in a Rose Garden ceremony.

▽

Representatives from BLM and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources conducted their annual **inspection of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline** June 22 through July 2. No major problems were found. Alyeska Pipeline Service Company also conducts its own inspections throughout the year.

▽

Domino's Pizza of Fairbanks made an unsolicited donation of 100 large pizzas to BLM firefighters in July. Manager Dale Dosser had the pizzas delivered hot to Fort Wainwright, then BLM delivered them to the firefighters, who had been subsisting on MRE's (military dehydrated rations). The firefighters were very happy to get them.

The 14 members of Point Possession Native Group visited BLM to receive their full land entitlement of 4,481 acres. Point Possession was the first Native group and second ANCSA corporation to receive full entitlement.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has been requested to join in the**Trans-Alaska Gas System EIS** effort. They accepted the request and came to Alaska in July to look at the project and meet with state and federal agencies.

▽

The **Southern Alaska Advisory Council** will meet September 10. The next **Iditarod National Historic Trail Advisory Council** meeting is September 16 and 17.

The 207th Infantry Group (Scout) of the **Alaska Army National Guard** presented a certificate of appreciation to BLM State Director Mike Penfold recently for allowing military training Exercise BRIM FROST 87 on BLM-managed land and for the assistance and cooperation of BLM employees.

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Chief, Public Affairs: Dave Vickery

Editor: Jane Mangus
Illustrator: Jim Mroczek
Typesetting: Danielle Allen

Contributors:
Sharon Durgan Wilson
Ed Bovy
Joette Storm
Sue Swartz

Photos
Karl Woods, page 1
Dan Gullickson, pp. 3, 7
Joette Storm, p.4-5, 6

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